

# ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF METHODISM

*Historical Society*  
Northern New Jersey Conference  
The United Methodist Church

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Robert Drew Simpson  
*Editor*

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## FOREWORD

This issue of our Historical Society publication offers two very useful contributions.

The first, by one of this Conference's most distinguished layman, John G. Lytle, is a very readable and yet carefully researched history of our Annual Conference through 1965. His work was done as a part of the Strategic Planning publication, but really needs to be lifted out and given a life of its own.

The second piece, prepared by our recent Historical Society president, the Rev. William T. Noll, offers a splendid original picture of the Eastern District Church Society. This Society is more than 120 years old and represents, especially in its inception, the efforts to deal with the urban centers of our Conference.

We are grateful for the effort of both of these Society members, and commend their work to you for interesting reading.

Robert Drew Simpson, Ph.D.  
*Editor*

## ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF METHODISM IN NORTHERN JERSEY

*John G. Lytle*

### PART I — INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Our Conference was born on Friday, April 17, 1857, at 1:30 A.M. (April 187), out of the twenty-first Session of the New Jersey Conference with the reading of two sets of appointments under the headings of "New Jersey Conference" and "Newark Conference." In the new Newark Conference there were four districts—Newark, Paterson, Newton, and Rahway—with 169 churches; 15,143 members; 237 Sunday Schools involving 2,926 officers and teachers ministering to 16,880 "scholars," with the help of 59,571 volumes in their libraries. The geographical territory embraced all or parts of eleven counties in New Jersey, four counties in New York, and two counties in Pennsylvania.

Later that year, on October 14, 1857, occurred the financial crash which shook the country and gave rise to spontaneous resurgence of religion in America known as the Great Prayer Revival. This had a profound influence on the growth of the new Newark Conference and shaped its activities for years to come.

### CONFERENCE SESSIONS

The first session of the Newark Conference was held in Morristown, at 9 A.M. on Wednesday, March 31, 1858, ending the following Monday evening (probably after midnight, as was customary) with the reading of the appointments. At that time, 11 of the appointments were in Newark, 6 were on Staten Island, 2 were in Paterson, 4 were in Jersey City, 2 in Rahway, and 2 in Elizabeth, and there were 19 multiple-church appointments (circuits). By 1865, the Conference sessions lasted eight days, commencing on Wednesday, March 22 at 8:30 A.M. and closing the following Wednesday at 45 minutes after midnight. Due to a paper shortage caused by the War, the daily proceedings were omitted and only the barest information was contained in the 1865 Journal. Annual sessions were held in different churches, upon invitation at the previous conference session (see Section XI of current Journal for chronological list of locations), and the preachers were entertained in the homes of the parishioners of the host church. For their hospitality, they received a rising vote of thanks from the Conference members and a free copy of the Conference Journal (otherwise 20¢). Since Conference lasted through Sunday when the ordination service took place, but covered a full day on Saturday before and started early on the following Monday, and since Sunday travel was taboo, one must wonder who took care of all the services in the home churches on Conference Sunday. By 1894, the churches seemed to be weary of this "hosting" procedure

and no invitations for 1895 were forthcoming. So the 38th Session was finally held in Tottenville, Staten Island.

It should be noted that raising missionary funds was a major concern, and every contributing member and the amount of his/her annual contribution—whether it was 18¢ or \$100, with 50¢ or \$1 being the usual amount—was listed in the annual journal BY NAME. This lengthening list caused delay in printing the Journal, due to the difficulty in reading the handwriting and because the printer frequently ran out of type and had to wait to order more. By 1867 these lists consumed 17 pages of fine print and were discontinued thereafter.

The third session of the Conference in 1860 voted to extend the maximum term of a ministerial appointment to 3 years, as had been authorized by the Discipline. It also added the Morristown District, so there were now five. At the 7th Session in 1864, the Rahway District was redesignated the Elizabeth District, and at the 9th Session in 1866, the Paterson District became the Jersey City District. There seems to be nothing in the daily proceedings to indicate that these changes were a conference action, so presumably they were made by the Bishop as his prerogative. In 1881, the boundaries were rearranged, the Newton District was discontinued and again a Paterson District re-emerged. In the Journal of 1881, the Presiding Elder of the resurrected Paterson District writes:

"In presenting a report of the Paterson District it may not be out of place to make some reference to the district recently obliterated, the territory of which is now occupied wholly by the Paterson and Jersey City districts. The Newton district was *organized* by Bishop Janes in the spring of 1851 and, *pierced* by the pen of Bishop Wiley, it received its death wound, died a peaceful death in the parsonage of Cross St. Church, Paterson, April 1880, and was buried in the Conference Minutes of that year. Its funeral oration was delivered before the Conference knew of its death . . . Farewell departed district. Sleep on in silence until the fiat of some future Bishop shall bid thee arise."

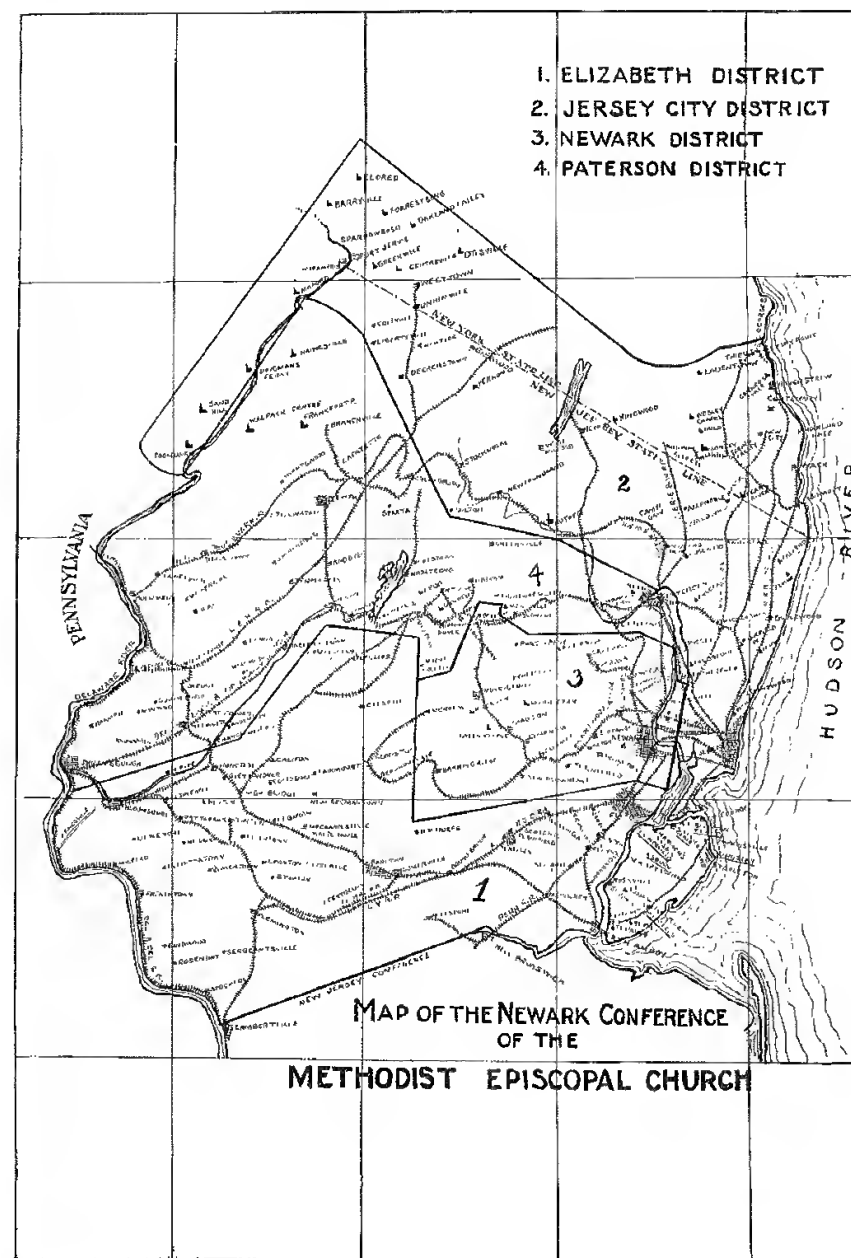
Frequent allusions by the Presiding Elder of the Newton District to its size, wilderness and difficulty of transportation justified the new alinement which was arranged along major railroad lines. The attached map shows the boundaries which stood for over 50 years.

An excerpt from the 5th Session (1862), as it opened, states:

"The hours of session were fixed at 8 A.M. for opening and 12M for adjourning. The third window from the pulpit was fixed as the Bar of the Conference."

It was also customary for the elected secretary of the Conference to appoint as his assistants a statistical secretary and an "engrossing" secretary.

Because of plans to remove Staten Island from the Newark Conference, the 10th Session passed a strong request to General Conference not to change



any of the boundaries of the Conference. This same session also took steps to establish District parsonages.

The Journal of 1868 contained the first Presiding Elder's reports—a brief paragraph by each. However, the length of these grew rapidly and in a few years they were occupying over 20 printed pages in the Journals. Several actions were taken to limit them but whether or not passed, they were ignored. Actually they contain a detailed history of the District. Each church was mentioned, births and deaths and other vital events were recorded. They make fascinating reading, though very time consuming, and the personality of the Presiding Elder is reflected—whether he was a scholar, a stickler for details, pious, serious, possessed with a sense of humor—and the prose reflected the beauty that must have been expressed in their sermons. Space prohibits the quotation of some very fascinating and illuminating passages. Likewise the memoirs of the deceased ministers and their widows consumed many pages, being almost complete biographies, and were written in the flowery and metaphoric language so typical of this period.

At the 15th Session in 1872, John Lett H. Sweres was transferred into the Conference. "This brother is of African descent and is the first colored man to be admitted to the Conference," says the Journal. He had served St. John's M.E. Church, Newark, during the previous year and was reappointed there for his second year.

In 1893, it was reported that several churches had dropped the "pew systems" and offered "free seats." In the same year, the conference sessions were shortened to six days, and at some previous General Conference, the maximum term of the pastorate was lengthened to five years. Two five-year pastorates were reported as "very successful." The General Conference of 1900 removed the time limit, and the Journal records 8 and 10-year pastorates in some of the larger churches. Periodically, however, there were resolutions presented to return to a more itinerant system, but they never passed. In 1909, the term Presiding Elder was changed to District Superintendent.

Examination of the deportment and character of member ministers was an important part of each Conference session. It was customary to "pass on the character" of each individual minister as his name was called and he reported the amount collected by his charge for missions. Later, the Conference modified the procedure by passing on the Presiding Elder first who then presented the ministers in his district for group "passing" by the Conference. By 1901, it was no longer necessary to report mission funds to get one's character passed.

In the early years of the Conference, it was not unusual to question the character of several ministers, to investigate charges against them, and to hear a report of the Triers of Appeals. After investigation, many were approved. In 1880, a minister was found "guilty of immorality and expelled from the ministry and membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church."

In 1896, the "ordination parchment" of an offending minister was ordered surrendered and all papers pertaining to his situation were ordered burned. He was permitted to withdraw under charges of gross immorality and insubordination rather than being expelled. The last actual expulsion seems to have occurred in 1884.

Because of their strict codes of conduct and morality, these early preachers welcomed divine signs of approval. In 1866, at the 9th Session, The Special Committee On The State of the Country, which had supported the Union throughout the Civil War, noted the victorious end of hostilities and the untimely death of Abraham Lincoln, and also thanked God for being on the side of the Union:

"7. That in the glorious work of grace which the great Head of the Church has vouchsafed us, we recognize an evidence not to be disputed that God approves the patriotic attitude of the church during the late fearful civil war, and the fidelity with which it has adhered to the principles of freedom, humanity, and religion."

In 1901, after the close of the Spanish-American War, when the U.S. acquired islands and territories formerly under Spanish rule, we read:

"Providence has been so well pleased with our national beneficence (to the freed American slaves) that He has suddenly placed under our guardianship those vast peoples who were a little while ago the vassals of a foreign power. . . . we are more able to Christianize the redeemed serfs for whom no other nation would or could so well care."

#### SOCIAL CONCERNS

Although this term does not appear, the ministers of the early conference years had very definite convictions about the life style of Methodists. The 10th Session, 1867, contained a vicious attack—the longest report yet recorded—on the immoral participation of members in public and popular amusements, namely: the theater, the ballroom and the card table. "Whatever others may do and be acceptable members of their respective churches, no person can dance or attend theaters or play cards and be good Methodists." Violators were to be removed from the church rolls. The antagonism to the Roman Catholic Church showed up frequently. As early as 1876, they condemned Roman Catholics and infidels for advocating that daily Bible reading be discontinued in the public schools.

The 20th Session in 1877 organized the Sabbath Union which recommended carefulness in regard to needless travelling, needless domestic labors and the reading of secular papers and books on the Sabbath Day. For years, Sunday newspapers were singled out as one of the greatest desecrations of the Sabbath. Paradoxically, the Conference of 1884 contained a long report deploring "the buying and reading of Sunday secular papers," yet in the advertising part of the same Journal were ads by the N. Y. Times and

N. Y. Tribune stating they were printed "daily and Sunday." In 1887, the preachers were admonished not to welcome to their pulpits any speaker who used public conveyances on Sunday. In 1898 a very specific attack was made on the dissipations of the Sabbath—baseball playing, dancing, drinking, attending so-called concerts, theaters, seaside resorts, reading Sunday papers . . . making Sunday a day of mere enjoyment. Another year, there was praised ". . . four earthly institutions belonging to God: the family, the Sabbath, the Church, and the civil government." In 1900, the D.L. & W was castigated for starting freight and passenger traffic on Sunday, disturbing church services along the line. Methodist conviction was unbounded. They endeavored to close the Columbian Exposition in Chicago on Sundays, the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, and succeeded in closing the Paris Exposition on the Sabbath. By the turn of the Century, attitudes began to mellow, but only a little. A report of 1906 admitted "cessation from all labor is impossible." But two years later the Sabbath was "threatened by excursionists (cheap Sunday fares), saloons, theaters, games, sports, irreligious immigrants from Europe, business . . ." But the greatest peril was the "unconcern of the Christian Church."

The strongest effort of Methodism, however, to change social practices was reserved for the liquor industry, the saloon and the saloon-keeper. The reports recognized that the moneyed backing of this industry was a powerful foe, but the Methodist Church, allied with the W.C.T.U. and the Anti-Saloon League waged a violent battle, with no quarter given. Some of the greatest rhetoric was reserved for these reports, starting with the early years of the Conference and building in crescendo through the turn of the Century. In 1858, the report read, ". . . the only remedy for this curse of men, is in touching not, tasting not, and handling not the unclean thing." In another year, the rallying cry was, ". . . the church must put down the saloon, or the saloon will continue to cripple the church . . ." The report of 1898 noted with sorrow the death of Frances Willard (outspoken reformer, temperance leader, and a founder of the W.C.T.U.) and quoted W. E. Gladstone (great English statesman), "Intemperance has inflicted more evil on the world than war, pestilence and famine." Another year reads, "The liquor traffic . . . must know that as long as the Methodist Episcopal Church lives it will have one constant, consistent, sleepless, unreconciled enemy in the land . . . we will endeavor to have all our young people take the total abstinence pledge for life." After the Spanish-American War, Congress was urged to pass the Anti-Canteen Law and the Groat Bill closing canteens in Army and Navy exchanges, in soldier's homes and in emigrant stations. In 1903, the report called attention to ". . . drink and the tobacco habit are on the increase among American women . . ." Recognizing that grocery and department stores were adding liquor departments, Methodists ". . . don't believe in boycotts but Christians should withhold patronage from such stores . . ." It was also time to ". . . expect a new Lincoln to unite the moral forces and send the monster to the grave." The M.E. Church continued

through the years to ". . . fight the drunkard, the drunkard maker, and to help the innocent sufferers." Although the "liquor dealers are in the strife for profit, the church is in it for the salvation of people." At one point, the Conference was asked to change the name of the Temperance Committee to the Anti Saloon Committee, but it did not pass. Every minister was urged to preach Temperance sermons several times a year, to rebuke members who used intoxicants, and to get young people to sign the lifetime abstinence pledge at as early an age as possible.

## EDUCATION

To their eternal credit, the strategy of the Methodist Church to develop and finance educational institutions has probably been one of the biggest jewels in their collective crown.

Pennington Seminary and Female Collegiate Institute of the M. E. Church was listed in the very first Journal of 1858, as was Dickinson College, and both were supported by financial pledges of the Conference. However, Pennington was conceded to be primarily the responsibility of the New Jersey Conference, and Dickinson was too distant to be of great use to the Conference.

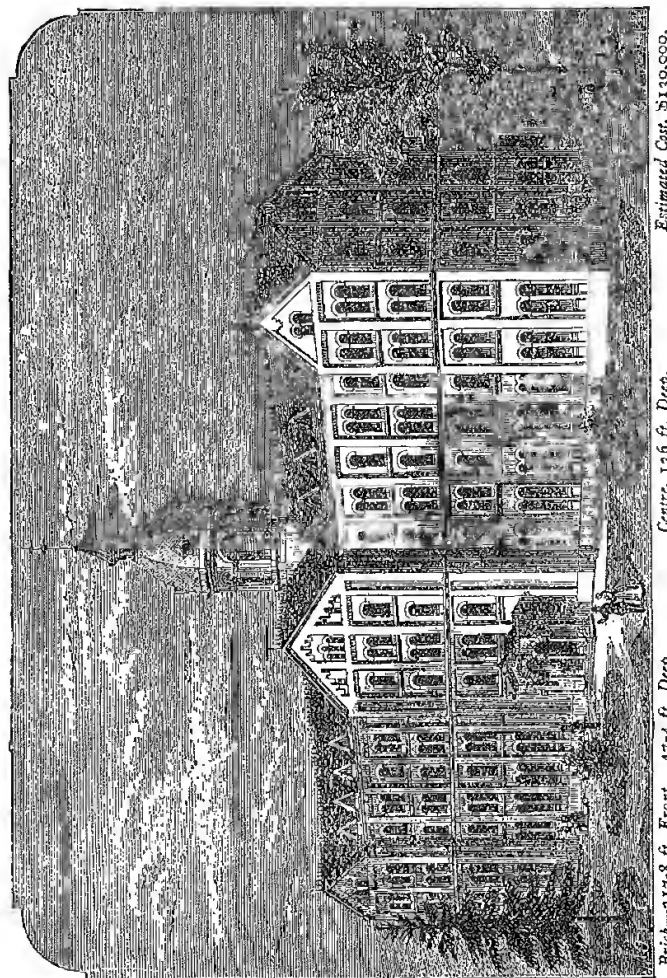
So Centenary Collegiate Institute became the darling "only child" of the Newark Conference. It was conceived on April 16, 1868 when the 11th Conference accepted 10 acres of land and \$10,000 in Hackettstown for building a Newark Conference Seminary. The building was to cost \$100,000 and a vigorous campaign was authorized. The building was started on July 29, 1869 and the cornerstone was laid on September 9th. The final building cost \$130,000. After a six year gestation period, it was completed and opened in September 1874 with 183 students. A small indebtedness continued to plague the Conference for several years until George I. Seney of New York (whose father was a circuit rider with Asbury) pledged \$15,000 if the Conference could raise the other \$18,000 to cancel the \$33,000 debt. The first class of 25 was graduated in June 1876. Twelve of the graduates were young ladies who were awarded an MEL (Mistress of English Literature) or an MLA (Mistress of Liberal Arts), which degrees were continued until they were abolished at the 25th Commencement in 1899.

Plainness of dress was encouraged as eminently appropriate to the denominational name. In 1878, board and tuition were reduced from \$275 to \$225 a year, with special discounts for clergy's children or young men planning to enter the ministry. By 1883, the number of applicants exceeded the school's capacity. In 1897, CCI experimented with an extension branch in Washington as an evening commercial school and recorded the largest student body—270 scholars: 184 residents, 66 day, 20 in Washington extension. The following year there were 58 graduates. This illustrious progress of the school was blighted by the tragic fire of October 31, 1899, which wiped out the building and all the student's belongings—providentially without



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any loss of life. An attempt to finish out the academic year, in churches and homes of Hackettstown, was not too successful and the school closed the following year for rebuilding. Reopening in 1901 with 102 students, an epidemic of smallpox interrupted that first new year. Growth thereafter was strong and steady and attracted students from many denominations and many states and even foreign countries. Reporting on the religious strengths of the school in 1906 "Chapel services twice a day . . . school prayer meeting on Wednesday evening . . . YMCA and YWCA hold Sunday morning services . . . there are two compulsory Sunday School classes." In 1910, in accordance with the educational trends of the day, CCI ceased being coeducational and became an all-girls school. Jointly with their action, Pennington became an all-boys school.

Another strategic effort was the Conference's strong and continuing support of the Freedman's Aid Society which came into existence in 1866 at the close of the Civil War. Its work was considered "more important than foreign missions because it is concerned with educating a class who will be in power in this land and who might as well be in bondage as in ignorance" (1876). Prophetically, the report of 1886 states:

"In 20 years of freedom, the freedmen have doubled their census and have only to increase for a century in the same ratio to number in 1986 one hundred and ninety-two million. They are now as docile as dependent; but let them, as they grow numerically, pile up their traditions of wrong, through our neglect, and legued with other disturbing elements that already menace the peace and prosperity of the Republic, they will, through riot and revolution, abuse their freedom and prove a curse to the liberty that broke their chains. Corrupted freemen are the worst of slaves."

By 1891, The Methodist Church was supporting 12 colleges, 29 academies, 3 medical schools, and 2 theological schools in the South, with 8,336 students attending. The journal of 1904 refers to the burning of the ladies dormitory of Walden University with the sad loss of life. Lincoln's birthday Sunday was set aside to emphasize educating of 9,000,000 black people and 3,000,000 destitute whites of the South. The report in 1909 claimed, "Our schools have trained and sent forth more than 12,000 teachers, 3000 ministers, besides members of other professions to work for and lead their own race."

Affiliations with other educational institutions were directly maintained. Each Conference session appointed visitors to each of the following Methodist-supported institutions:

Pennington Seminary—Boarding School for both sexes  
Bordentown Military Institute  
Centenary Collegiate Institute  
Women's College of Baltimore (later Goucher College)  
Syracuse University  
Boston University  
Drew theological Seminary



Dickinson College  
Wesleyan University

These visitors would report to the Conference, as a result of a two or three-day campus trip: the condition of the school, its faculties and facilities, the health and morale of the students, the religious emphases, the scholastic achievements, etc. These reports were presented to the Conference and were printed in the annual journals. In the Journal of 1910, priority was given to the school ads clustered in the first pages preceding any of the commercial ads.

Mission activities to foreign countries—India, China, Japan, Korea, and countries in Africa—were not limited to evangelism alone but focused on eliminating illiteracy, distributing Bibles in native tongues, and founding schools and colleges as well as hospitals and orphanages.

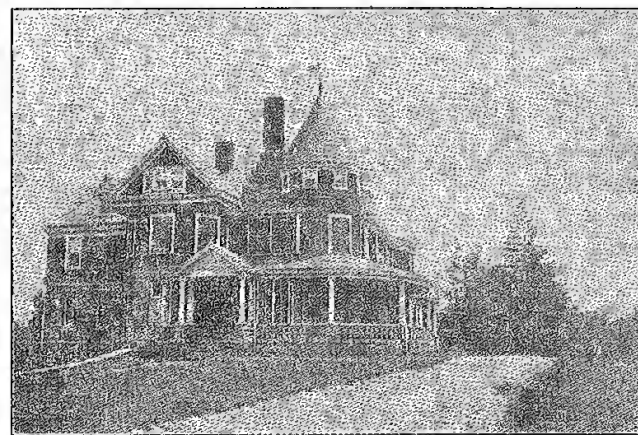
No history of Methodism—even a segment as small as the Newark Conference—can be told without recognizing their tremendous contribution to educational emphases and the founding of educational institutions at all levels.

#### MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Evangelism was the day to day profession of the itinerant preachers and it was taken seriously. Every preacher was held accountable for the conversions he accomplished. It would appear that after conversion ensued a period of probation before full accreditation as a church member. The Presiding Elders' reports usually noted the number of conversions effected by each charge (pastor) during the year and the total number on his district. This was generally reported even before the financial data was given. The annual reports from Centenary Collegiate Institute indicated the number of revival meetings held during the school year, the number of conversions among the students, and the number still to be converted.

A number of methods were used. It should be remembered that we are looking at a period in Methodism when Sunday included at least two preaching services, when there were mid-week prayer meetings, and weekly class meetings. Later, there were Sunday School sessions and Epworth League meetings. The "altar call" was the standard feature of a worship service. Evangelistic meetings of one or more days were held on charges and the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension acquired an evangelistic tent which was used so much that they recommended one for each District. In 1910, this tent was reported to be "superannuated" and does not seem to have been replaced.

The main thrust of evangelism by the Conference during the last half of the 19th Century, however, centers around the Camp Meeting. A Conference Camp Meeting Committee was appointed by the 9th Session in 1866, and this committee organized a Conference Camp Meeting in August of that year at Speedwell Lake, between Morristown and Morris Plains (near the present Western District Parsonage). In 1868, 15,000 people attended the



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Camp Meeting in this location and three preachers preached simultaneously. In 1871, the Annual Feast of Tabernacles (Camp Meeting) was held on a camp site near Denville, and it was recommended that it be a permanent site and be named "Mt. Tabor." The Conference of 1873 admonished this Camp Meeting not to hold services on Sunday until it could be enclosed by a fence to secure proper sanctity. In 1874, permission was given to again have Sunday services because the gates could be closed, preventing the services from becoming public except for such as are enclosed within the ground. The report of 1891, however, tells a different story:

"... it has been changing for a number of years, and it is changed. The throngs of former days are not seen there. The preachers have largely forsaken it. Conversions are so few that it is hard to count them."

Although efforts were made to restore it to its former power and annual camp meetings continued for many years, it gradually became a summer resort. The original 30 acres was expanded to 118 acres and the 16 x 23 foot lots that were tent-size gave way to 25 x 100 foot lots on which cottages were built. The Journal of 1909 describes the facilities as: a stone reservoir water supply, a year-round post office, a library, a hotel, a 9-hole golf course, 7 tennis courts, a baseball diamond and croquet courts. The population was then 1200 to 1500.

Conversely to the decline of the Camp Meeting was the ascendancy of the deaconess movement. Paragraph 209 of the Discipline of 1888 authorized deaconess activities and the first Conference Board was organized in 1889. However, it was on November 5, 1897 that five deaconesses began their work and a home was provided for them in Jersey City (not too far from where our present C.A.U.S.E. facility is located). As early as 1891, a change had been noted in the cities as foreigners began to move in. As this trend increased, the deaconesses became the missionaries and evangelists to these growing foreign populations which were largely Italian. By 1902, there were two deaconess homes, one in Newark with six deaconesses and one in Jersey City with five. The total annual cost of the two homes and their resident deaconesses was less than \$2000. Their reports indicate tremendous achievements, so the deaconess movement provided 11 tireless workers for the salary of one minister. One report stated, "The Deaconess is the living link between the Church and the multitudes . . . there is a constantly increasing demand . . . opportunity is here afforded the younger women of our churches . . . urge ministers to seek out such women and direct them into this work." In 1910 there were 19 deaconesses, 7 in Newark and 12 in Jersey City. Their work was primarily among the Italian immigrants. They made 20,600 home visits, cared for 174 sick persons in 2,758 hours of nursing, found employment for 65, and provided for 5 homeless children plus many, many other Christian acts. For this, each deaconess received \$8 a month, and the total annual budget for the Deaconess' ministry was \$5,388. The report closes, "Our greatest need is more deaconesses." (Since they

passed out tons of used clothing, it's strange that they were not unionized by the I.L.G.W.U., which was active in other sweat shops about this era.)

#### LAY ACTIVITIES

The voice and activity of the layman (19th Century terminology) was generally confined to the local church. The Newark Conference of the first 50 years was the preachers domain and he jealously guarded this clerical arena.

The General Conference of 1872, held in Brooklyn, N. Y., was the first open to the laity. Six clergy represented the Newark Conference and two lay delegates went along. These two were elected by the first Electoral Conference of Laymen held at Hackettstown, in the Presbyterian Church (apart from the regular session in the Methodist Church) on Friday, March 15, 1872, from 11 A.M. to 3 P.M. The minutes were printed in the back of the Journal of 1872. Thereafter, a Layman's Electoral Conference was held once every four years to elect the two lay delegates. From 1904 on, the lay delegates were equal to the number of ministerial delegates. The session of 1890 placed a "Plan For Voting on Women Representation" at General Conferences in the Journal to be voted on by every church in the first week in October. When the Conference of 1891 convened, every parliamentary device was used to avoid voting on the question, but when it was presented, it failed by 46-139, after which a motion to publish in the Journal the names of all who voted "for" was defeated. Later the vote taken in churches the previous October was presented: 2,286 for; 3,177 against. In 1894 a proposal to have equal lay and clergy representation to General Conference was defeated 6 to 127. The question of women delegates came up again but was summarily squelched on a legal technicality. So, the quadrennial Lay Electoral Conferences continued to meet apart from the Conference sessions, in the church of another denomination, but a ministerial delegation of 2 to 5 visited each such one-day lay meeting, and a similar small delegation visited the Conference session and was granted a few minutes to extend greetings.

In 1873, a Women's Foreign Missionary Society was organized to "rescue heathen women for Christ." Their work flourished and a few years later the report read, "wherever the Methodist missionaries have undertaken work, there are schools, colleges, and publishing houses." Twenty years later in 1893, the Women's Home Missionary Society was created to aid frontier ministers and institutions in the south and for Newark Conference local work in the cities. The work of the women progressed and helped to provide large amounts of money for both mission fields—at home and abroad.

Just as women have long provided strength to churches, there has been concern about the men. In 1899 a report stated, "... men are in the minority in churches . . . they are in clubs, saloons and tied to their businesses . . ." In 1907 a men's organization was started called Wesley Brotherhood but little progress seems to be noted in subsequent years.

The Epworth League was founded May 15, 1889 in Central M.E. Church, Cleveland, Ohio. By 1891, 135 chapters had been organized in the Newark Conference. Presiding Elders and Pastors worked diligently to get at least one chapter in each church as quickly as possible. It was for young people of 18 to 80, and it had a four-pronged strategy: (1) spiritual work, (2) mercy and help, (3) literary improvement, (4) social and recreational. It was to be a training ground for young people coming into the Methodist Church, but if there were too many young people in control, the four objectives were not met equally and "strong parental authority" was advised. On the other hand, where there were too many "old" young people, they dominated the organization and didn't give young people a chance to develop their churchmanship.

The Journal of 1902 makes mention of a Christian Stewardship Movement among young laymen. It was 18,000 to 20,000 strong in the denomination and each member was a tither.

The one organization for lay persons of all ages, conducted principally by lay persons, was the Sunday School. It exhibited great strength all through the early years of the Conference, but it was of such importance that a separate record could be written on its growth and accomplishments.

These, it seems, were the principal lay activities of this era, but they were reported on by the clergy who were the main actors in the drama of the Newark Conference. The laity were the stagehands working behind the scenes.

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\*John Foster Dodd—the youngest member of the first class admitted on trial to the Newark Conference and Conference Secretary for 28 years.

## PART II: THE NEWARK CONFERENCE THROUGH TWO WORLD WARS

### INTRODUCTION

After the restless itineracy of the 19th Century, the Conference seems to move into a period of stabilization, with gradually lengthening pastorates and expansion of church facilities. These are the years of 1911 through 1946, a period of 35 years. A major part of this period seems to reflect a feeling of growing complacency within the Conference. There were many prophetic

voices that deplored the situation, but as many of these prophets spoke out, there was a tendency to deal with more practical matters and "lay these concerns on the table" or "refer them to a committee for further study." Perhaps this was best stated by Dr. Woodruff in his memorial address before the Conference Session of 1923. In paying tribute to the men who had died during the year, he recalled the 236 ministers he had known since the Newark Conference was formed in 1858:

"But these men were preachers. They knew how to tell the story and have a hearing. They compelled attention . . . R. L. Dashiell preached his sermons on the prodigal son till so electrified was the congregation and so inspired the preacher, that his dear wife quietly rose in her pew and stood on her feet as if she would yet hold the good man to earth. . . . These men were true to the faith. . . . They preached on the sinfulness of sin, the power of the Divine Christ to save, and the certainty of the life to come. That which has made the Methodist Episcopal Church, though one of the youngest of the great denominations, to rise to the highest place in numbers and influence is because we have preached a Gospel of saving grace, that meets the needs and longings of the human heart. They still live. The air is vibrant with their presence, they are here in this old mother church . . ." (Conference was held that year in Halsey Street Church, Newark).

### THE CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

It is interesting to note that although the city has often been designated as the source of the greatest problems, the numerical changes within the main cities of the Conference during this era were not too startling. A comparison of statistics for 1911 and 1946 reveals (keeping in mind the addition of 4 city churches from the Methodist Conference as a result of the 1939 merger):

1911		City	1946	
No. of Churches	Membership		No. of Churches	Membership
13	2,189	Staten Island	12	3,074
4	1,138	Elizabeth	6	1,835
13	3,619	Jersey City	11	2,369
3	853	Bayone	3	992
16	6,636	Newark	11	4,066
7	2,733	Oranges	7	4,040
13	3,545	Paterson	15	3,214
69	20,713	TOTALS	65	19,590

38.4% of Conference Membership

25.5% of Conference Membership

In 1940, the influx of Methodist Protestants added about 2,000 to the membership rolls. The following year, there was a 10,000 loss as membership rolls were cut to reduce apportionments. The change was in the ethnic composition of the city church membership. Over the years, reference was

## BILL OF EXPENSES

### Newark Annual Conference, 1916

#### Explanations

All Members of Conference, Probationers, and Supply Preachers, attending Conference at their own expense, are entitled to present claims.

NO BILLS ACCEPTED for meals taken at home.

NO BILLS ACCEPTED for entertainment (which does not cost the guest anything).

NO BILLS for members of family.

Bill for room and board to cover only ACTUAL EXPENSES, but not to exceed \$1.50 per day total, (nor 50 cents for individual meals).

The Newark Conference Commission on Entertainment  
Debtor

To the REV. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Railroad Fare - - \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Trolley Fares - - - \_\_\_\_\_

Room - - - \_\_\_\_\_

Meals, No. \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total, \$ \_\_\_\_\_

made to the large number of immigrants that came into the eastern seaboard. Italian work was a major emphasis, but Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Germans, Russians, Czechoslovaks, and Poles were mentioned. Separate churches or congregations were formed for many of these nationalities.

The Italian work was probably the largest part of this effort. Italian congregations were formed and eventually Italian missions emerged with Italian ministers to serve them. The dedication of these pastors was such that during the depression, some refused to accept their salaries in order that their churches might survive.

There was little change in the District structure. The four districts that had been established in 1918 remained practically the same until 1933. Then, due to the depression and shortage of funds, the Elizabeth District was eliminated and the Conference reorganized into three districts still named for the city centers of influence: Jersey City, Newark and Paterson. The Paterson District was the largest in Methodism, with 86 charges and 119 churches. In 1945, a resolution was passed establishing a committee to study the possibility of reconstructing the fourth district. In 1946, the committee advised against this action. Instead, it recommended one office and one secretary for the three DS's. This was adopted. It is also interesting to note that there were serious recommendations that the District Superintendents be eliminated, that the Conference be divided into 15 districts and that pastors be assigned as "district leaders" on a rotating basis. Obviously, these were never adopted.

Because of the differing nature of ministry, a District Superintendent would often divide his district into groups, putting the rural churches into one group, the suburban churches into another group, and the city churches into still another group. District organizations and group activities were generated within these sub-districts.

The rural churches were an enigma. Some DS's implied they were worth little. They had to be supplied by students, and it was a question as to whether the student was leading the church or the church was educating the student. One District Superintendent even had the audacity to suggest that the best thing that could happen to some country churches would be to have a fire. He even mentioned that three had been struck by lightning with "good results." (At the same session of conference in which this was made, this same individual was charged with maladministration, although the charge was dismissed.) Other District Superintendents came to the defense of the rural churches, pointing out that many of the great preachers were the products of the rural church. In 1928, District Superintendent Mac Donald said,

"When will this retreat in the country field end? Never, unless we change our attitude—that is, never until we are utterly and hopelessly defeated—driven from the field in which our fathers won, but which we could not maintain. Our members are indifferent, our preachers without enthusiasm for this type of work. There is something romantic

about going to India or to Africa to win the unChristian world of Christ. But the thought of going to Kingswood, to Centerville, or to Fairmount, gives us chills instead of thrills. Men who feel honored to be sent to the most miserable of city churches, with their penury, lack of inspiration and hope, almost feel hurt to be asked to minister to the humble but self-respecting people of the open country."

Another District Superintendent also pointed out,

"Most every rural place in the District is feeling the touch of the commuter. We shall soon be calling them frontier suburbs."

In 1925, a Rural Church Commission was formed to deal with the problems of the rural church. This was the time for great proliferation in the committees and commissions of the Conference. It became such a problem that another commission was formed—the Finance Commission—to coordinate and apportion all the financial requests. And, in 1928 a Sifting Committee was formed to determine which reports would come before Conference and which would be printed without reading.

The District Superintendent's reports became longer . . . and longer . . . and l-o-n-g-e-r. But then as one D.S. gleefully put it, as he started his annual report:

"This is the District Superintendents hour. Do not begrudge it. Has he not listened to the droning reports of everybody for 12 months—and the alibis and the explanations (don't forget the explanations)—why then be so ungenerous as not to allow him to be the bore at least once a year? We confess our failures. It is impossible for many ministers to believe the right men have been made District Superintendents. No wonder when we think what they require of us. We must provide good places for everybody out of the bad places they give us for the purpose; and then we are generally criticized because every man has left a church in fine condition—only to be sent to one all run down. What we do to the churches during conference week to bring this about is a dark secret. He must let the young men slip up; but he must not let the old ones slip down . . . He must make his report bright, and yet make it out of the dull stuff furnished . . . He must make it brief and yet tell of all the brilliant achievements . . . He must make every place look good, and yet he must tell the truth—a virtue which is supposed to be lost to a man on being made a District Superintendent."

So, the District Superintendents' reports filled many pages. In 1939 and 1940, one Superintendent presented a combined report. But in 1941, the former system of individual reports again prevailed. Conference even passed a rule that a District Superintendents report should not exceed 2500 words because they were getting so costly to print, but this was circumvented when the offenders personally paid for the printing in the Journal of all verbiage in excess of 2500 words.

The Journal of 1920 reports: The . . . superintendent of the Jersey City District was called, his character passed, and he read his report." Then the Conference sang the hymn, "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken." Later it was reported that the names of the Effective Elders were called, by district, and their characters passed. This was a customary procedure, originally done minister by minister, but now performed under the "group method."

#### THE WARS

The effect of the two world wars on the Conference may be viewed from at least two ways—attitudinal and financial.

There must have been some ominous clouds gathering as early as 1911, when Rev. Snodgrass presented an International Peace resolution, expressing ". . . our prayerful hope that Christian diplomacy . . . may be the beginning of a great world movement by which the nations would learn war no more." By 1917, the same author wrote, "The hour of action strikes . . . Henceforth, every man is either a patriot or a traitor, a hero or a coward . . . our National Flag is the sacred symbol . . . to be displayed in and upon our churches, upon our church grounds, and upon our homes . . ." whereupon they called for a vote, played The Star Spangled Banner and reported that the resolution was adopted by a unanimous standing vote. The following year, in an even longer report, "We urge upon all ministers . . . to cooperate . . . with the War Council of our church . . . Victory is not in doubt . . . for the Lord Christ must reign . . . and to his holy cause . . . we pledge every ounce of our strength." By singing America, the resolution was passed with a unanimous standing vote. In 1918, the Conference service flag bore 3406 stars and 54 sons or relatives of ministers were in uniform. A number of pastors served as chaplains, or spent time with the Red Cross, the YMCA, or as volunteers at service camps and hospitals. Although no Conference members were casualties, at least two who had been former members and transferred out met death in the service. It was customary for congregations to grant their pastors leave of absence to be involved in war activities.

As soon as the war was ended, the Conference went on record as supporting President Wilson and his peace efforts. In 1919 they sent him a telegram asking him to note that to God belonged "the honor and glory for the successful issue of the recent World War" and to recongize him in the Peace Treaty about to be signed at Versailles. It was strongly behind the recognition and U.S. participation in the League of Nations and the International Court of Justice. Since it was a "war to end wars," the best way to honor those who had died was to insure a lasting peace. A Conference memorial to the 1924 General Conference expressed words that could still be appropriate for the 1984 General Conference: "war is the most colossal

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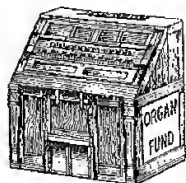


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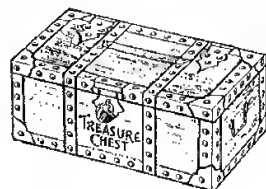
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and ruinous social sin that affects mankind today; that it is utterly and irremediably unChristian; that it has now become not only futile but suicidal; and that recognition of this fact is necessary to the continuance of civilization." In 1929, the Conference was gratified by the gains made for World Peace by the adoption of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, which does away with war as an instrument of national policy and declares that all controversies will be settled by pacific means. In 1934, the session not only adopted a resolution endorsing the action of Methodist students who have refused to participate in military service on conscientious grounds, but it admonished the bishop not to appoint any Conference member to the post of Chaplain in the Army or Navy. This was also the last time the Journal carried an ad for Bordentown Military Institute. As late as 1939, the Conference passed a resolution that the USA not get involved in any war unless our shores are attacked.

Less than two years later, we find the Conference requesting a separate report from Army Chaplains and adopted a resolution greeting "... our brother Chaplains and pray God's blessing upon them in their difficult and important work." Then they called upon the Methodist Church to fill its full quota promptly.

Then came Pearl Harbor, and in 1942 the Bishop announced that the Methodist quota of chaplains was 798 and only 222 were then in uniform. This session also formed a Commission on Camp Service to serve the soldiers to be stationed at the newly created Camp Kilmer. In 1944 a resolution was adopted expressing the intolerance shown to Americans of Japanese descent and requesting a reconciliation. At the end of WWII, the 25 chaplains from the Newark Conference were given official recognition and their picture taken as a group. All told, the Methodists furnished 1747 chaplains, of whom 29 were killed. Most churches had service flags honoring the men and women who served, showing the gold stars for those who did not return. At the close of the war, the 1946 session also took cognizance of the Conscientious Objectors in Conference boundaries. Since they had to serve in labor camps and pay \$30 a month for room and board, without any chance to earn money, they had run up an accrued debt of \$3200. The Conference voted to liquidate their debt, thus cooperating with the Quakers, the Mennonites and the Church of the Brethren who had assumed this obligation for all CO's.

Financially the churches struggled to pay their bills. The Jersey City RR terminal and the Black Tom Island explosions created considerable damage, which was an expense to many churches, but WWI, was too short to affect the Conference in any severe way. After the war, a large number of churches undertook improvements and enlargements of facilities. Many of these changes involved the addition of recreational, social and service facilities—education additions, gyms, kitchens, and meeting facilities—to make the church the center of focus in its community.



From the 1922 Journal. Scribbled on the margin of this Journal was:

SEVENTH YEAR

SANE EVANGELISM

**Evangelist** *Song Leader*  
**Mil Senior** *Soloist*  
*Preacher*

Accredited Evangelist of the Newark Conference  
Methodist Episcopal Church

Member International Association of Evangelists  
Winona Lake, Indiana

Endorsed by the District Superintendents  
Campaigns anywhere in the U. S. A. or Canada

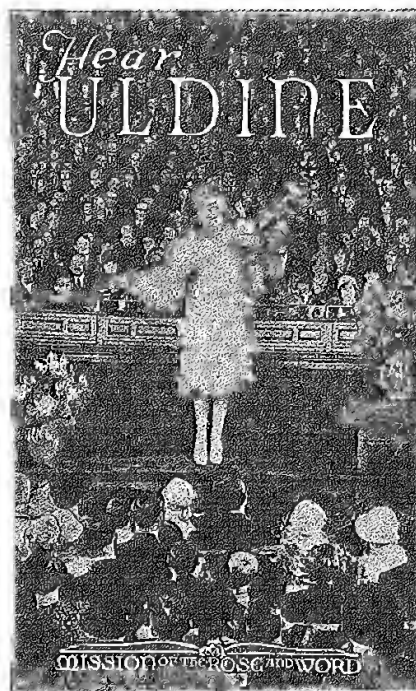
Home Address: No. 129 North 5th Street, Paterson, N. J.

"He who hollars down a well,  
About the goods he has to sell,  
Will not rake in the shining dollars  
Like him who climbs a tree and hollars."

On the back of this postcard  
to the right was printed:

"Hear ULDINE UTLEY at  
Butler Methodist Episcopal  
Church, Butler, N.J. from  
January 3rd, to 17th (1915).  
Every evening except Saturday  
at 7:45."

In the Journal for 1915, the  
Superintendent of the Jersey City  
District records, "Butler has  
had revival services which  
resulted in 40 professed con-  
versions. The pastor had the  
assistance of Brother P.C. Bascom."  
(Perry C. Bascom was on Special  
appointment as Conference  
Evangelist.)



The depression had a profound affect on the churches. Very little new building activity took place—only the most essential maintenance was attempted. Budgets suffered as did preacher's salaries. Almost every year the D. S. would report churches raising salaries, but he also had to report a larger number of salary reductions. Many churches which had incurred debt in the post-WWI era struggled to reduce their debt, and, on occasion, the Conference had to step in and try to give relief to individual churches. The WWII period was largely involved with debt reduction.

One project, first mentioned in 1928 was the planned construction of a Newark Church Center. This was to be a 25-story building on property owned at Broad and Marshall Streets in Newark, containing a number of commercial offices plus a full Methodist Church facility (similar, I presume, to the skyscraper church in Chicago). Plans were developed over a couple of years by the Newark District Church Society, but the depression not only canceled the project—the property was lost in foreclosure proceedings in 1937. Only the \$25,000 stained glass window was salvaged before the abandoned church was torn down.

A constant source of trouble during most of this period was the problem of apportionments. These first became troublesome as Commissions and Agencies proliferated and the allocations for funds to each became centralized in the Finance Committee. Apportionments based on pastors salaries, on memberships and on property values all had adverse affects on the Conference—and the churches. Memberships were pared, resulting in Conference losses; salaries were cut, antagonizing ministers; church properties were lowered in value, creating underinsurance. Everything was tried, but the dilemma continued. No solution could be found suitable to both larger and smaller churches.

## EVANGELISM

As one of the Conference members once noted, "... if the church doesn't evangelize, it will fossilize." The Methodist Church in America grew out of the fervent evangelistic efforts of the circuit riders. Few District Superintendent annual reports didn't include the number of unchurched people added to individual church and district rolls.

In 1911 there were three conference Evangelists on Special Appointment, but they were gradually diminished, and up until 1924 there was generally only one. He was called upon to conduct evangelistic services in Districts and individual churches. Since his was on Special Appointment and there is no record of any payment by a Conference Treasurer, presumably he furnished his own housing and support. Perhaps that is why he placed a half-page ad in the journal each year.

During the teens, Gipsy Smith and Billy Sunday (William A. Sunday to Methodists) were, together with lesser known evangelists, moving large numbers of people in their evangelistic campaigns. Some of these were under



the auspices of the Newark Conference and brought in large numbers of converts. Evangelistic enthusiasm ran high and week long meetings were held in churches and districts.

In 1931, the Commission on Evangelism presented a resolution signed by 100 members stating, "... this holy flame has grown dim upon our Methodist altars in recent years with the consequence that many of our churches have grown so spiritually cold that vital Christian experience and church interest have languished and in many places failed ..."

The Conference, over the years, developed plans of its own or participated in denominational plans and even ecumenical plans. In 1916, it was the Methodist Forward Movement. In 1921, the "Centenary" was proposed, embracing evangelism and world service as its program. In 1929, a visitation Evangelism Campaign was launched in the Newark District, which enlisted the support of the laymen to accomplish it. In 1931, a Commission on Evangelism was established within the Conference. In 1940, mass evangelistic meetings were held all over the country, led by the bishops. At the close of this era, in 1945, the denominational "Crusade for Christ" was launched. This was a five-year campaign emphasizing five segments of church life: (1) Evangelism; (2) Religious Education; (3) a \$25,000,000 financial campaign for world relief; (4) Stewardship; and (5) a new World Order.

What about Mount Tabor, the evangelistic center of the Conference in the 19th Century? For most of this period, it struggled along with summer camp meetings for the summer residents. By 1939, there were 110 year-round residents and a Drew Student was assigned to lead year-round religious services. Differences of opinion developed between the Conference and the Trustees of the Camp Meeting Association. The latter felt they had an autonomy and were not governed by the Conference. The Conference decided to divorce itself from the Association, one reason being that the Association had developed a public golf course and it was open on Sunday. There were legal problems to a separation—incorporation charter, use of name, etc. The actual dissolution of the Mt. Tabor Camp Meeting Association was placed in the hands of the Conference Trustees. In the meantime, in 1942, a new Methodist Church was established at Mt. Tabor with 92 members. In 1947, the church at Montville was declared abandoned, and the Conference Trustees recommended that "the building be torn down and that the materials be used in construction of a new church at Mt. Tabor ..."

#### SOCIAL CONCERNS

Some of the concerns which had been most vehemently protested in the Nineteenth Century were not now mentioned or were considerably toned down.

Sabbath Day observance was a continuing crusade for many years, but in diminishing crescendos. In 1911, for example, the Conference denounced business, pleasure and vice on Sunday (only on Sunday?). Disregard of the

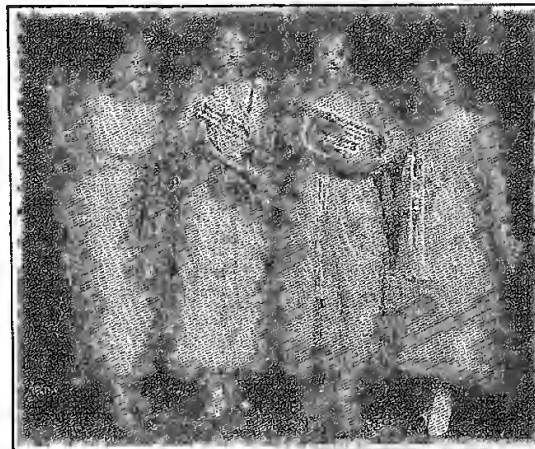
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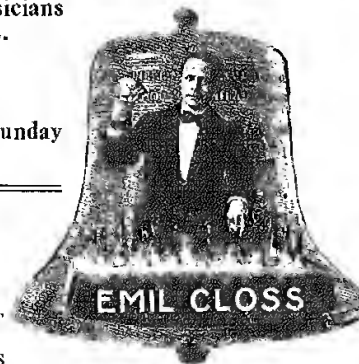
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Sabbath was sometimes referred to as "a Continental Sabbath." Later, rest on one day a week promoted "economic efficiency." After WWI, it was recognized that the exigencies of war had made all days seem alike and urged all ministers to promote Sabbath Day observance among church members. In 1920, when one church bought a motion picture machine, it was clearly reported that it was "for use on weekday evenings."

Other social problems claimed the attention and expression of the Conference. Child Labor, Equal Suffrage, lasting peace, care of disabled veterans, the coal strike, League of Nations, World Court, obscene literature, immigration quotas, Bulshevistic propaganda, the KKK and others appropriate to the times.

But by far the greatest attention was reserved for their crusade against the liquor industry, both in word and action. It was a constant source of irritation that New Jersey seemed to lag behind all the rest of the country in legislation, in compliance and in strategy. New Jersey was one of the last three states to ratify the Eighteenth Amendment and New Jersey law enforcement officials failed to enforce the laws after they were passed. During the 20's, the liquor interests sought to discredit the Anti-Saloon League and the Federal Council of Churches (so what's new?). In spite of all the strategies employed against them, Methodists detected all their ploys and in one report observed that "Prohibition at its worst is better than the saloon at its best." Repeal was a blow, but Methodists fought back. They fought to eliminate liquor advertising on radio and eliminate use of it in the movies. They sought to prevent its sale to servicemen. And when all else failed, they supported legislation to limit the number of saloons and package stores per 1000 of population.

Pari-mutuals, horse racing, and betting were other evils which the Methodists opposed and tried to rally others in opposition.

#### EDUCATION

The Conference—as did Methodism—always supported educational institutions. Conference visitors to colleges and universities persisted into the twenties and then the attention focused down to the two "resident" institutions, Drew and Centenary Collegiate Institute. When the denomination as a whole was convinced that Drew ("the prophetic school," as it was sometimes called) was a denominational responsibility, then CCI became its only internal educational institution.

CC always had a good record and its students were accepted by the best colleges where they did well. The trustees and the administration were plagued for years with a debt of \$35,000. Finally, the trustees realized how much they had paid in interest over the years and in 1924 the debt was paid off. However, this left only a small endowment of \$10,000, which threatened their continued accreditation by the University Senate and made it difficult to provide scholarships and to attract teachers. For years they plead-

ed with the Conference for attention, but always there seemed to be more important needs to receive the allocation of Conference funds. This situation repeated itself year after year. In 1929, plans were made to add a two-year college course and in 1930, 47 girls were enrolled in the new Junior College. In 1936, because there was no girls college in New Jersey, the school decided to move out of the college prep phase and concentrate on the Junior College. In 1937, the name was changed to Centenary Junior College. (In 1937, Bette Cooper, one of its students, was selected as Miss America at the Atlantic City Beauty Pageant.) That year the report to Conference stated:

"The amounts received from the Newark Conference collections for the past twelve months amount to \$784.86. During that time Centenary has given \$13,527 (to deserving students)—in other words, Centenary gave in educational aid \$17 for each \$1 received from the Conference."

But still the Conference was niggardly about giving it more financial support, overlooking the plea that the Prep School facilities couldn't be adapted to the collegiate needs, and no major improvements had been made in 40 years. Finally, in 1946, after the Conference had conducted a \$500,000 Pension Fund Crusade and a million dollar Crusade for Christ, C.J.C. received approval to launch a \$300,000 campaign as part of an \$800,000 improvement program.

The Freedman's Aid Society, supporting schools in the south for negro education, was always staunchly supported by the Newark Conference. The Society, in 50 years of emancipation, embraced one theological seminary, 2 medical schools, 7 academies, 10 colleges, 500 instructors and over 7000 active students. In 1921, the name of the agency was changed to the Board of Education for Negroes, at which time the report stated, "If we but continue the great work of education among the negroes, there soon will be no race problem." In 1923, the report claimed it had educated over 200,000, and among them were 10 bishops of the Methodist Church.

#### SPECIAL EDUCATION

Two segments of the Conference work during this period merit special attention—the work of the deaconesses and the Goodwill Industries.

- (1) Deaconesses had been part of the Methodist Church for several years and in 1911 there were 17 deaconesses in the two homes in Newark and Jersey City. As the foreign-born poured into the cities, it was largely delegated to the deaconesses to work with them. Theirs was a "shoe leather" ministry. They made thousands of calls annually; they helped by doing nursing when there was sickness in the homes of the poor; they distributed clothing; they helped secure employment; they taught Sunday School and Industrial Schools; they provided day nurseries for working mothers. Unfortunately, the reports on them are very

sketchy—mostly statistical. Occasionally, the District Superintendent would allude to their work briefly.

Their funds were very meager. They lived at the deaconess homes, and even the expenses of these homes were minimal. It is difficult to determine whether they were paid for their work. If they were, it was about \$100 per year at the most. The 1914 report of the Deaconess Board says "... a most important factor in our work among foreign populations." Yet the total cost of maintaining 16 deaconesses for one year was less than \$3700. Subsequent years showed little more. Is it any wonder that each annual report of this Board exhorted the ministers to "impress upon the young womanhood of our church this great field of Christian service." (And, in other parts of the Journal the Conference would pass resolutions condemning child labor and exploitation of women in textile factories!)

Attrition took its toll on their ranks and many were not replaced. By transfer, by death, by old age—and even one or two by marriage—they dwindled in numbers. They were eventually recognized, and their appointments were listed with other ministerial and supply appointments. In 1943, several new deaconesses were brought into the Conference, specifically to work among the unchurched in the cities. One of these reported 7,225 visits in her first eight months and she says, "I climbed more steps daily that those leading to the top of the Washington Monument." The very fact that the city churches survived during this period is certainly due to the labors and ministries of these dedicated women whose only reward was to eventually have a place in the Deaconess Retirement Home in Ocean Grove—or in some other section of the country.

(2) The Goodwill Industries is an exciting ministry of the Newark Conference.

Following the pattern of one first organized in Boston, St. Paul ME Church in Jersey City initiated it in 1920, "to save the waste in society." In 1921, it was incorporated, and in 1922 the J.C. Dist. Supt. stated, "The changing of derelicts into good willed citizens, as we change old clothes and furniture into the resemblance of new, is no small task." By 1924 the Goodwill was providing over 50,000 hours of work for unfortunate, handicapped and crippled persons needing work. They collected 7,000 bags, 2400 items of furniture, took in \$40,000, and served 49,000 customers. In 1925 they bought an old pie factory and converted it into a personal utility factory. In 1926, with Conference support, they bought a camp in Butler. By 1928, their two page report listed city missionary work in two Jersey City churches, including Russian and Italian language work; classes in English for immigrants, home economic courses, gym and playground activities, a day nursery, a Mothers Club, a training center (approved for internships by Columbia Univ. & Drew Univ. students), the store and workrooms for rehabilitation of materials

# CAMP TABOR

## OF THE

### Newark Conference Camp Meeting Association,

Denville, Morris Co., N. J.,

(Junction Morris and Essex Division and Doonton Branch, D. L. & W. R. R.)

President—I. SEARING, Morristown, N. J.

Secretary—R. B. YARD, Jersey City, "

Treasurer—M. T. KING, Morristown, "

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M. T. KING, Esq., . . . . . 1872.	PETER SMITH, Esq., - - - - . 1873.	
A. HOAGLAND, Esq., . . . . . 1872.	Rev. J. M. TUTTLE, - - - - . 1874.	
G. W. LA BAW, Esq., . . . . . 1872.	Rev. R. VANHORNE, - - - - . 1874.	
I. SEARING, Esq., . . . . . 1873.	AB'M KLOTZ, Esq., - - - - . 1874.	
Rev. J. T. CRANE, . . . . . 1873.	O. H. PIERSON, Esq., - - - - . 1874.	

Conference Superintendent of Camp Meeting of 1872.

Rev. A. L. BRICE, Presiding Elder of Newark District.

Associate.

Rev. M. E. ELLISON, Presiding Elder of Morristown District.



**S**ITUATED among the breezy hills of Morris County, free from annoying insects, and supplied abundantly with Spring Water, these well shaded Grounds are among the most desirable for Summer sojourn; while for the true work of the Camp Meeting, and freedom from worldly attractions, they form a real "TABOR" of PROFIT, PEACE and POWER to souls bent on the MASTER's service, or seeking to learn more of the "Old, old story of Jesus and His love."

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and people, the Fresh Air camp at Butler, a coordinating office, and an outlet through radio station WKBO. Their budget was \$118,000.

In 1931, they began to feel the effects of the Depression. There was a loss of cash contributions and a reduction of income as scrap, rags, paper, etc. diminished in price because of a demoralized salvage market. They resorted to a campaign for soap coupons as 1,000,000 coupons would get them some much needed new equipment. But the Goodwill not only survived the depression, it found ways to continue its ministries and services. It was a household word among Methodists and their big brown bags were available in every church. Their camp at Butler served churches for conference and outings, and because of it thousands of city kids received fresh air vacations in the country.

### CONCLUSION

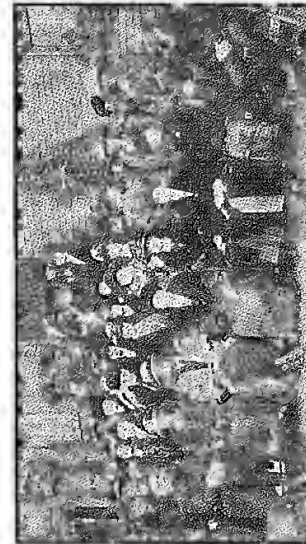
Another generation of ministers and ministry to the Newark Conference passed. Ministers who entered the Conference as young men in 1911 were ready for retirement in 1946. These years represent approximately 7,000 service years—the prayers, aspirations, disappointments, triumphs, heartaches, mistakes, courage, of 200 preachers during 35 years. You can't say, "This is what they did!" You can only say, "Here are some of the results."

And the results which are shown are based on the judgement of one person. One of the district superintendents quotes:

"It's not your place to judge . . ."

"How can I help it . . . I got to think somethin'! When you see a tree, you can't just think there's a tree, can you? You think, "That's a nice ash tree. Might have a good grain in it." You judge it, don't you . . . So, I got to think something."

Well, this is what I thought about this period in our Conference history.



### The Women's Bible Class

Invites all the Women of the Church

TO MEET WITH THE MEN

For Three Sunday Mornings

November 15th, 22nd and 29th  
at 9:45

November 15th . . . Subject "Tolerance" . . . . . Leader Dr. Stierly of Drew  
November 22nd . . . Subject "The Seed of the Church" . . . . . Leader Dr. H. J. Johnson of Paterson  
November 29th . . . Subject "Paul at Antioch" . . . . . Leader to be announced

Every Man and Woman in the Church and Congregation is invited  
The Best Way to Keep Boys and Girls in the Church School is to

COME WITH THEM . . . . . TRY IT FOR THREE SUNDAYS



### Some of the Men

Who have been invited

TO MEET WITH THE WOMEN

For Three Sunday Mornings

November 15th, 22nd and 29th at 9:45

November 15th . . . . . Leader Dr. Stierly of Drew  
November 22nd . . . . . Leader Dr. H. J. Johnson of Paterson  
November 29th . . . . . Leader to be announced



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For entertainment, artists of highest renown, lecturers and clergy of world prominence and for the religiously inclined every variety of service. For the tired business man, golf, fishing, surf bathing.

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## PART III: THE POSTWAR YEARS 1947 to 1965

Postwar Methodism is the story of a church that is facing a new world, new values, new problems and many decisions. Fortunately, to face these problems, the Newark Conference was endowed with clergy (according to the annual Disciplinary question) who were "blameless in their life and official administration." They evidently realized the work cut out for them, for as the 1947 session got under way, one member moved that they remove their coats and this motion was adopted. They were fortunate to have in their midst such illustrious men as Benjamin Franklin Dickisson, Abraham Lincoln Fretz, Paul Revere Schriver, and of course John Wesley Lord (elevated to the episcopacy in 1948).

The Conference emerged from World War II with the three Districts that had been created in 1932 "solely for the sake of economy in a time of necessity by the depression"—the Jersey City, the Newark and the Paterson Districts. In 1951, the Conference adopted a resolution to re-district the conference and a committee of clergy and laity was appointed to study ways in which it might be done. This committee reported the following year on the need for four districts, citing the overload on the District Superintendents prohibiting them from functioning most effectively. It suggested two redistricting plans: (1) by counties, and (2) along major highway lines. Conference voted the four districts, effective for the 1953-54 conference year, but left the method of division to the Bishop, as was his prerogative, with whatever help he needed from the special committee which was continued for another year.

But if they were willing to let the Bishop make the minor decision of *how* to divide the new districts, it seemed that everyone (almost) in the Conference wanted to be in on the major decision of *naming* the new districts. In 1953 the "county" plan having been decided upon, the committee presented two suggestions for naming the four new districts: the District Superintendent Method and the Boy Scout Method. The first would identify the districts by the city in which the District Superintendent had his elderage; the second would adopt the four points of the compass—north, east, south and west. A torrent of oratory followed (according to the list of clergy who debated it). Legend has it that at a point where the discussion was becoming unduly heated, Aubrey Guyn, beloved for his wit, obtained the floor and said, "Mr. Bishop, I recommend that the four districts be named: Fee, Fie, Foe and Fum!" With the tension relieved, the points of the compass prevailed by a vote of 106 to 81. But . . . this was not the end of the discussion. Two days later it was brought up again to reconsider the names, but this was voted down. At the close of conference that year (1953), just prior to the reading of the appointments, Bishop Newell appointed a fourth District Superintendent to be the "gentleman of the South."



The name designations simmered for a whole year. Evidently a large number of clergy still felt that the new district designations did not give proper historic recognition to our major cities and at the Conference session of 1954 a petition was presented, signed by 86 members, requesting reconsideration. By a vote of 70 to 50, this was passed and the districts became: Newark, Paterson, Elizabeth, and Morristown. So they were for one day! Twenty-four hours later the presiding Bishop announced that the name change was illegal as it had not been passed by the necessary  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority. After considerable additional debate, another vote was taken and the new district names failed to pass. So, the North, East, South and West designation was reinstated and continues to this day.

Commencing in 1947, it became the tradition to honor the class of "men ordained as elders and received into full connection . . ." by placing their group picture in the very front of the annual journal, right behind the presiding Bishop's. In 1956 the customary Certificate of Ordination lists Ruth M. Ellis as one of fifteen ordained as Elders, but her picture was not included among the customary "Men Received into full Connection." It was not until two years later that she was pictured . . . with the class of 1958. Thereafter the pictures were captioned, "Received into Full Connection."

During the post-war period there was a shortage of ministers in Methodism and this shortage was felt by the Newark Conference. As early as 1947, the Superintendent of the Paterson District pointed out that of 88 ministers in his district 22 were from within the Conference and 66 came from outside the Conference bounds. In 1952, this Superintendent pointed out that of 115 churches in his District, 45 were served by students, 6 by supplies and 10 by retired clergy. Another District Superintendent mentioned that Methodism had gained 854 new ministers but lost more than that to retirement during the same period. The shortage was dramatized by the statistics on supply pastors. In 1940, there were 2177 serving denominational churches; by 1957 this number had more than tripled to 6716. To reverse the trend, it was projected that 1200 new ordinands were needed in the denomination each year. In 1955 the superintendent of the Southern District reported that of 87 churches only 29 had full time ministers. In 1956, another District Superintendent pointed out that of 56 ministers in his district, only 10 were from churches within the Conference bounds. If it had not been for the conference's proximity to Drew and our conference's ability to lure students from other conferences to join the Newark Conference, we would be in a bad way. That same year, the General Conference set the denominational need for new ministers during the quadrennium at 11,200, or 2800 per year, and the Newark Conference quadrennial quota was 132 by 1960. In 1960, we had to report failure to reach the quadrennial goals: in that year the denomination recruited only 880 of the needed 2800 per year, and the Newark Conference fell short of its four-year goal of 132. A new goal of 30 new ministers per year was unrealistically set. In 1963, a report stated, "Last year of the ten who were ordained Elder only three came from

churches of the Newark Conference. This year five of the nine to be ordained Elder came from Newark Conference churches. "In October of 1963, a Special Session of Conference was called on "The Bishop's Mission on the Ministry." Five bishops were present, each speaking on a different phase of the Ministry. Workshops were held for three groups: (1) Ministers, (2) Ministers' Wives, and (3) Laymen. A district superintendent's report of 1967 obviously influenced by Earl Brewer's book of the day "Up Ahead for Methodism" had some very pertinent points to make:

"The heart of the problem can be stated this way: Does Methodism really believe (1) that every Methodist member, regardless of residence, has the right to be under the care and supervision of a fully-trained and ordained Methodist minister and the obligation to support his church with time, talent and treasure; and (2) that every Methodist minister has the right to a decent income and the obligation to serve his church with his full time, training and talents? These goals are far from being realized today.

"The average size of membership of Methodist parishes is too small to provide a full work load or proper income for a minister . . . we are misled when we think that our major problem is with larger churches and over worked ministers. . . . The real problem is at the other end of the scale where we have a surplus of small pastoral charges. . . . It is here that ministers do not carry a full load of membership service and thus manpower is wasted and our shortage is increased. . .

"About one-third of these small charges in the land are served by supply pastors. . . . Precisely at this point must we take a bold step to move toward our first goal: to have a fully-trained and ordained leader in each and every parish. . . . This will require the bringing together of churches to provide the work load for the pastors and to create the salary for these men. . .

"At least part of the solution to our shortage of ministers and to reach toward our goal of serving each and every Methodist with a fully-trained and ordained minister is to stop this process of dividing our charges into separate Church parishes. . . . For many years we have moved on the policy that there is something attaining unto the millennium if we could but reach the one-pastor to one church goal. . . . This is like a disease which has spread over our church, a disease which Brewer calls "stationitis." We seem to feel that all our ills will be solved in this way, when, actually it will but make the situation increasingly worse. . .

There was a day in American Methodism when the circuit was seen as the only way to meet the tremendous responsibility felt for the salvation of the souls in the nation. . . . Dedicated men went across this country, carving out circuit after circuit, laying the foundations of Methodism. . . . These men were not ashamed of the Cross of Christ or the burden of the circuit as it is frequently called today. . . . Indeed, there is the definite tendency to accord a lower status to churches, ministers and laymen still caught in the circuit pattern. . . . If this tendency had persisted during the first hundred years of American Methodism, the foundations of the church would not have been laid across the land;

and it seems that if the present practice persists in this second hundred years, Methodism will not only fail to build on these foundations but it will cease to have its hold upon the religious life of the nation. . ."

Dr. John Foster Dulles, a former Secretary of State, made a very thought-provoking remark pertinent to this problem forty years ago when he spoke at the inauguration of a new president of Union Theological Seminary. He said, "Out in Tennessee there is a plant which turns out bombs. Here we have a plant which turns out Ministers of the Gospel. The two seem remote and unrelated. Actually, the issue of our time, perhaps the issue of all human time, is which of the two outputs will prevail."

#### EVANGELISM

In the Nineteenth Century, one of the Presiding Elders wrote in his report, "As most important we will report first the spiritual interests of the church." The new members won to Christ and the money collected to support missionaries engaged in similar activity abroad were the measure of success in the ministry. Somehow, these needs did not seem quite so imperative to pastors in the post-war years. Perhaps society was becoming more complex and ministry was distracted from this fundamental endeavor by other issues. As one District Superintendent said, "It was necessary to promote the cause of Evangelism. How sad a statement that we should need to press folks to do that which is the central purpose of the church." So, the Conference launched programs, campaigns and special efforts to bring in new members. For example, the fourth year emphasis of the quadrennial Crusade for Christ was the year of Evangelism. As a result, 1949 saw over one million accessions in the Methodist Church and was considered very successful. In 1948, the Jersey City District reported an "excellent response" to the theme: CHRIST THE ANSWER, while the Newark and Paterson Districts were cited for a need for "immediate re-vitalization of the program of Evangelism." (Perhaps they were looking for the question!). A Conference Secretary of Evangelism was designated, as were such secretaries for each district; these were "additional duties" of regular parish appointees. The 1951 session adopted a resolution for the Newark Conference to join with the New York Area in a United Evangelistic Mission, to commence in the fall of 1952. In 1952, it was postponed until 1953. But in the fall of that year, laymen went out two by two and "6,846 commitments were made in our Newark Conference."

Special schools and special techniques were planned for each Conference year. In 1957, whole-hearted support was voted for the Billy Graham campaign in New York City. Groups such as "The Twelve" and "The Fisherman Clubs" were formed by churches. With a Conference Secretary of Evangelism, new programs and re-runs were planned. Another United Evangelistic Mission was scheduled for the fall of 1958. For five days, Newark

Conference ministers would visit parishes in the New York East Conference; the following week the visitation would be reversed. Result: 3748 new members for Newark Conference; about 4,000 for the New York East Conference. By 1961, some District Superintendents were reporting new members gained but net losses overall; others were omitting any report on such figures. One pointed out that the Methodist Church has lost its virility and become "middle-aged": appealing to the middle class and traveling the middle of the road. The Quadrennial program introduced that year was "Jesus Christ Is Lord" and to emphasize it there was to be "One Great Day of Christian Witness." We wonder what our founder would have thought of one day of evangelism in four years! In 1963, the Report of the Commission on Evangelism was voted not to be presented but only printed in the Journal (where it's certain everyone read it!?!). A new, young minister was appointed Secretary of Evangelism and he had the boldness to recall that John Wesley arranged during each conference session to have a theological discussion for the benefit of all ministers. So, he proposed that three hours be set aside at the 1965 session for such a discussion. These were carried out on three separate days and these discussions were reported as being "very lively." However, there is no indication that it was repeated in subsequent annual sessions.

#### LAY RECOGNITION

The women in Conference churches were always a bulwark of Methodism in northern New Jersey, whether they were the Ladies Aid, or the Missionary Societies, or the Women's Society of Christian Service, or the United Methodist Women—you could change their name but you couldn't dampen their enthusiasm or their effectiveness. One could write a whole history around them and be overwhelmed by their accomplishments. Methodism in America and in our Conference would never have survived and thrived without their prodigious, often unheralded, efforts.

Also, during this period of twenty post-war years, the men of the Board of Lay Activities performed a magnificent service. Gradually they found areas where they could be effective. One finds them working throughout the Conference—training church laity in their local church functions; educating persons in stewardship, urging adequate salaries for pastors; recommending that pastors have secretarial help; proposing pastoral expense allowances for autos, continuing education and ministerial supplies; conducting schools in Theology for lay persons; going out on evangelistic campaigns and calling on people; holding prayer groups around the Conference on a regular basis; having Easter breakfasts together; etc, etc, etc. The lay persons—men and women—who were finally accorded full Conference membership on a parity with the clergy, brought a dedication and an allegiance to our Lord worthy of their membership status.



## THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF THE CONFERENCE

The greatest change which occurred was in the shift of Methodist centers of strength. It was a shift from the cities to the suburbs. Perhaps those clergy who wanted to name the four new Districts in 1953 after the cities had a vision of the Conference standing firm on its traditional ground and ministering to the changing populations in true Methodist fashion. There may have been more strategy in that naming contest than was at first apparent. At any rate, the Methodist population shifted westward.

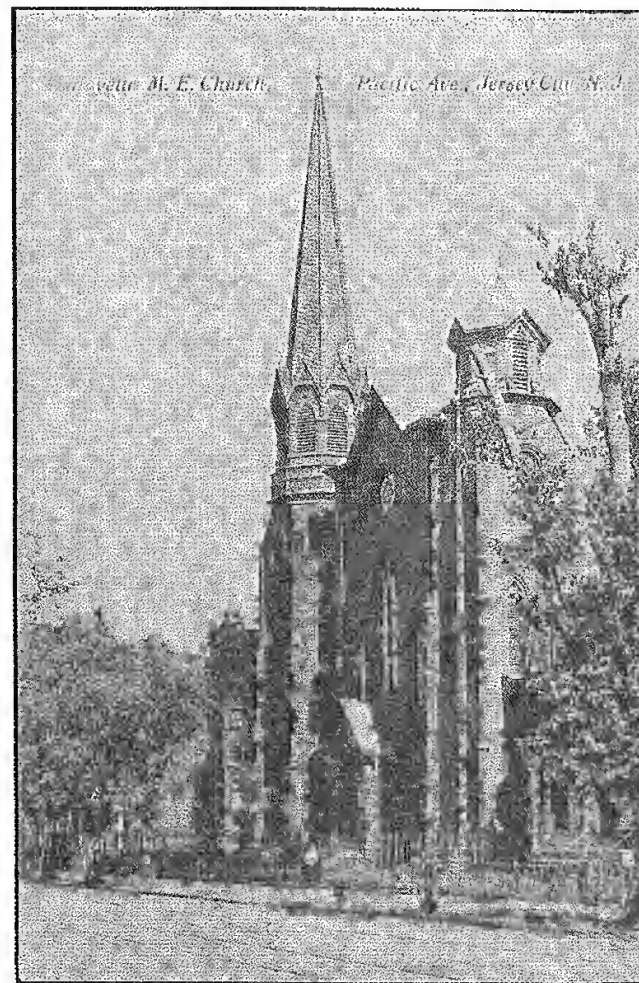
Newark, which had forty-four Methodist churches—according to one superintendent—gradually closed one church after another. The big churches that had been the pride of Methodism in a bygone era—those fine examples of stonework and architecture that had been the pride of city landscapes—those bastions of proud and affluent city congregations numbering in the hundreds—they dwindled and disappeared. PRIDE is one of the deadly sins, and “Pride cometh before a fall!” And they fell! One by one they disappeared from the Conference statistics. This was true of Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth and all the adjoining urban areas.

Two observations about these changes may be important. First, there were still people around these churches. They were not the customary Methodist congregations, i.e., they were not white. They were swarthy skinned, they were black, they spoke other languages, they were not Methodist—in fact, many were not Christian. So, the cities were ripe mission territory. The fact that these people still needed the church was evident in the fact that many of the abandoned Methodist properties were sold to congregations of non-Methodists—Abyssinian Baptist, African Methodist, Jewish, Muslim, and others. The second observation, and it's a corollary to the first, was that the churches in the suburbs grew and expanded and built. They began to take pride in their beautiful new edifices, their large parking lots, and their educated and affluent memberships numbering in the hundreds.

Perhaps a third observation may be appropriate in passing—there were no more deaconesses. They dwindled and vanished like the city churches.

Let's examine one more significant series of events which reflect our shifting Conference efforts. The Goodwill Industries recovered from hard times during the war and survived to perform a great service in the cities. They usually took in enough money to cover their expenses and provided a livelihood for many handicapped persons. Their camp at Butler, opened in 1925, served for Conference retreats and meetings. More important, however, it was a fresh air camp for hundreds of children, year after year, and was largely financed by the Goodwill itself. Then the Goodwill approached the brink of bankruptcy and had to dispose of some of its property. One of the first properties to be sold was Camp Hollingshead in Butler. It is interesting to note that in 1956, the year that Camp Hollingshead had to close, Conference received the first proposal that it invest in a camp site

Remember this Church?



Lafayette M. E. Church  
Pacific Avenue  
Jersey City, N. J.

As it appeared in 1912.

of its own. It was four years before a new site at Stillwater was acquired and named "Camp Aldersgate" (at the suggestion of the Leonia MYF).

Most of us are familiar with Camp Aldersgate as it has served the Conference well for many years. Aldersgate has beautiful facilities—and expensive facilities. It is a camp which caters more strongly to the affluent clientele of the suburbs who can afford it. Although some scholarships are available for children and youth of our cities, it is not a "fresh air camp." So, Camp Hollingshead died and Camp Aldersgate was born. This is one more example of the changing character of the Conference.

#### CONCLUSION

Our sketchy story of the Newark Conference has reached the year 1965. At this point in time, the Newark Conference has died and The Northern New Jersey Conference has been born. The Central Jurisdiction has been abolished and churches of the Delaware Conference have been absorbed into the new Northern New Jersey Conference. Twelve churches on Staten Island and their pastors have been transferred to the New York Conference. The northern and southern New Jersey Conferences have been formed into the new New Jersey Area and a new Bishop has taken residence in our midst—Bishop Prince A. Taylor. A new Conference procedure involving workshops is about to be inaugurated at the 1966 session. The District Superintendents have finally acceded to an annual composite report (and I withhold comment on that!)

What's more significant, many of the persons of the Conference who were taking the actions reported in the Journals from 1966 on are still around, still very active and still very vocal. They could well resent some upstart lay person interpreting what they did and what they said. Furthermore it is easier to interpret events from a vantage point of time. Already, this may have gone too far. Actions are getting too close to evaluate—and there are still many participants who can fill in the actions of the past twenty years and put their own interpretation on them. Discretion advises me to stop at this point—and I do!

I will leave you with two quotations in closing. The first is from a paper by James H. Davis, Director of Church Planning Associates. He says:

"The old itinerants went everywhere preaching . . . they gathered a handful of converts, they organized them into a class, they built a chapel . . . while the other denominations were building stately churches in the larger cities along the railroads, the Methodists were putting up chapels wherever there was a cluster of homes, expanding as rapidly as the frontier . . . the settlers conquered the land . . . the circuit riders conquered the people for Christ . . . frontiers are open again today."

The second quotation was written sixty years ago by a pair of highly respected historians, Halford E. Luccock and Paul Hutchinson in "The Story of Methodism." In the Conclusion of their book, they say:

"The spirit in which Methodism has made its real advances has been in its readiness to adventure in unaccustomed ways. Methodism really began when a handful of college students defied the conventions of their campus; it spread over England when a handful of daring young ministers defied the conventions of their church; it has reached the world in those hours when its heroes have defied the conventions of their times. Methodism has had its hours of regularity, of conformity, of walking the well-marked roads. But those have not been the high hours. A conforming Methodist is just one among many denominations—a healthy influence in the life of the community, of course, but not to be distinguished by much from the other healthy religious influences there. But whenever the moment comes that Methodism is ready to break the trammels of convention, to forget the trodden paths, to mount again for a new circuit through some new wilderness or along some new border, then Methodism becomes aflame once more, and there burns before the eyes of men that pillar of fire which John Wesley dreamed that the movement which he founded should ever be."

Where will Methodism in northern New Jersey be during the remaining years of the Twentieth Century? This is the question we face today—in 1989.

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#### A HISTORY OF THE EASTERN DISTRICT CHURCH SOCIETY (now the Eastern District Church Union)

*William T. Noll*

Carmen Rodriguez could hardly see over the edge of the table. She was three years old, and her tiny, thin face showed no happiness. . . It was hard because tiny Puerto Ricans speak almost no English, and the substitute spoke almost no Spanish. It was a case of sign language and smiles. . .

"Now our memory verse," the teacher said, "is 'He cares for you'. Can you say it?" Each one nodded and labored to pronounce the words. All except Carmen. Her eyes were uncomprehending and a bit frightened.

The teacher drew her close and held her clenched hands. Putting an arm around her she pointed upwards to heaven with one hand. "He. . . He. . . He?" she asked. Carmen nodded with reservations, and repeated - "Heee. . . He. . ." What to do next? She enfolded the little girl in a fond "bear hug" at the same time saying "Cares. . . cares. . . He. . . He cares. . ." The Spanish youngster smiled wanly and tried it. "Caresss. . . cares. . . He. . . He cares. . ." Teacher poked a loving finger in Carmen's tummy, "For you. . . for you. . . He cares for you!" They laughed and hugged each other and went through the lesson together. "He. . . cares. . . for you. . . He - cares - for you!"

After ten minutes of enjoyable practice before her little friends, Carmen was ready to try it by herself. . . "He - cares - for - you. . . He cares for you!" A great big smile came from inside as she said it over and over, proudly. Only four words, the first she'd ever spoken in English. Only four words, but enough to begin with, and enough for anything that life might bring!<sup>1</sup>

The story of Carmen Rodriguez, which took place some thirty years ago, is a part of the history of the Eastern District Church Society, an organization which is, at least, 120 years old in 1989. Much has changed during these years, and nowhere has the change been greater than in the cities of the Eastern District of Northern New Jersey, cities such as Newark, Jersey City, Bayonne, Hoboken, and East Orange. Throughout its history, the Church Society has been operated as a means for dealing with the effects of rapid social change in urban areas, and for providing resources for Methodist ministries, "enough to begin with, and enough for anything that life" in the city "might bring."

Methodism in Newark dates back to the visits of pioneer bishop Francis Asbury, who stayed and preached in Newark many times, first in 1784. Among other early Methodist preachers in Newark were Thomas Morrell, a major in the American Revolutionary army and a noted preacher, and Ezekiel Cooper, a famous early circuit rider, who was pastor when Wesley Chapel, the first Methodist house of worship in the city, was erected in 1808-1809.<sup>2</sup> By 1857, there were eleven Methodist Churches in Newark, with a combined membership of over 4,000; by 1890 5,500 Methodists were members of fifteen city churches.<sup>3</sup>

Francis Asbury and other pioneer circuit riders stopped in what is now Jersey City to travel the ferry to and from Manhattan, but organized Methodism in Hudson County dates only from 1829. With the growth of railroads terminating in Jersey City and Hoboken, these and other nearby cities grew quickly, and by 1870 fifteen churches in Jersey City, Hoboken, Bayonne, Bergen, and Hudson City included 2,200 members.

In the years following the Civil War, Newark and Jersey City, like other East Coast cities, experienced dramatic changes. New immigrants flocked in, attracted by the burgeoning industries. Most of these new arrivals knew little or no English, and few came from a Methodist background in their homelands. Most were Roman Catholics. Ethnic neighborhoods grew and flourished; then, as the residents prospered or sought new opportunities,

<sup>1</sup>"Heart of the Matter," from *Mission Lights*, a collection of brief stories for use in sermons, church papers, etc., sent by the Methodist Inner-City Mission in Jersey City around 1960.

<sup>2</sup>Archey Decatur Hall, *The Newark District Church Society* (Newark, 1928), pp. 12-14.

<sup>3</sup>These and subsequent statistics are from the yearly *Journals* of the Newark (later Northern New Jersey) Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal (later Methodist or United Methodist) Church.

they moved on, and new arrivals from other cultures came to take their places.

In 1867, a "City Mission" of the Methodist Episcopal Church was established in Newark, and a missionary appointed. By the next year, mission chapels were in use in the North Newark and Ironbound sections of the city. The 1869 Conference *Journal* reported that the "Newark Missionary and Church Extension Society" had recently been "reorganized" to serve the needs of the city. Here is the first record of the work of the Church Society in Northern New Jersey.

Much of the development of new Methodist churches in the cities took place when a pastor and/or members of an existing congregation went into a nearby neighborhood to preach the gospel, rent a building, establish a Sunday School, and organize a new congregation. But when the residents of the neighborhood spoke a different language and experienced different customs, the church discovered that a planned city-wide response was necessary.

J. T. Crane, presiding elder of the Newark District, stated in his 1869 report to the Annual Conference:

We need \$100,000 in Newark at once to begin and carry on new enterprises. We need a Church down Clinton Avenue. The Eighth Avenue Church is well attended, and if it were twice as large would soon be filled. The same may be said of the Union Street Church.<sup>4</sup>

Three areas of need became apparent: organization, planning, and funding. These needs become a recurring theme through the next 120 years of history, and they summarize the basic purpose of the city and district mission and church extension societies.

The churches in Hudson County experienced similar pressures. An "Alliance" of Jersey City's Methodist Episcopal Churches was established in 1879. In 1895, a new "City Evangelisation Union" included Hoboken and Bayonne as well as Jersey City. In 1903, the Union was incorporated so it could hold title to property; in the same year a superintendent was appointed to the Union.

The organizations in Newark and Hudson County also reflected an awakening concern across the denomination for urban ministry. In 1864, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church established a Church Extension Society. It was later reorganized as the Board of Home Mission and Church Extension, and a National City Evangelization Union was formed. According to the *Discipline* of the church: "to promote city evangelization and city church extension, it (was) recommended that in every city in the United States where the Methodist Episcopal Church has five or more charges, a local union be organized."<sup>5</sup> In 1912, a separate Depart-

<sup>4</sup>Both quotations are from the 1869 *Journal*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>5</sup>*Discipline* of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1900, pp. 207-208.

ment of Cities was established in the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension.

The organization of a city evangelization union across the political boundaries separating Jersey City, Bayonne, and Hoboken, illustrated another reality confronting urban Methodists. In 1895, S. P. Hammond, presiding elder of the Newark District, wrote, "Although there is much opposition to the mooted plan of uniting the Oranges and all adjacent villages in one great municipality, to all intents and purposes, ecclesiastical Newark is bounded on the east by the Passaic River, on the west by the Orange Mountains, on north and south by county lines."<sup>6</sup>

By 1907, the district's presiding elder, Jonathan Meeker, was reporting that:

The Newark District is so compact and its fifty-six churches so located, that a federation seemed not only desirable but necessary. The charges in Newark are unequal to the problems within the city, and the suburban difficulties are not so problematical. Moreover, we are one body. Hence the idea of a District Church Society.

The plan was first outlined by the presiding elder to fourteen laymen, on December 28, 1906, who were asked to give their best business judgment concerning it. A very frank discussion covered every essential point of the scheme and it was heartily and unanimously indorsed, the four ministers present concurring. A committee was appointed to complete the details of organization. Upon the invitation of a few laymen, on Monday evening, January 28, 1907, ninety-eight laymen and ministers, the former being largely in the majority, had dinner together in the city of Newark. After the dinner Rev. A. W. Byrt, D.D., corresponding secretary, and Mr. A. P. Slaon, president of the Brooklyn Church Society, made addresses, telling of the success of cooperative endeavor in the city of Brooklyn in promoting the interests of its Methodism. The presiding elder of the district then outlined the plan by which he hoped to cultivate the connectional principle of Methodism, and presented the constitution and by-laws which had been prepared by the committee appointed at the first meeting, which those present, after declaring themselves charter members, adopted tentatively until its provision for final adoption by the Board of Managers could be carried out. Officers and an Executive Committee of thirty—twenty laymen and ten ministers—were elected. An impromptu subscription was taken, at the suggestion of some laymen, which amounted to over two thousand dollars. The former Newark City Church Extension Society is absorbed by the new organization.<sup>7</sup>

Meeker listed some of the objectives of the Society, to solve pressing city and country problems in existing churches, to take up the work of city evangelization, to promote social relations by gatherings in different parts

of the district, to promote spiritual interests by a plan of systematic exchanges, and to formulate a plan for the liquidation of all church debts. The first project was the purchase of a church building which was held in trust for the First Italian Methodist Episcopal Church of Newark.

The idea of organization into a district church society, as opposed to a city society, was ultimately recognised in the Discipline of the church, as is quoted in the revised constitution of the Newark District Church Society.

**PURPOSE** "The city or district society may include in its work the organization of Church Schools and the organization (but not the constituting) of Churches, the aid of weak Churches, the acquisition of real estate and the erection of buildings, the adaptation of downtown Churches to their altered environment, the securing and holding of endowments for the city or district society and dependent Churches, the conducting of missions among foreign-speaking and other needy peoples, the development of well-organized open-air evangelism, the maintenance of kindergartens and industrial schools, the promotion of social and settlement work, including services rendered in connection with juvenile court cases, the support of rescue missions and of institutions for the relief of the sick and the destitute."<sup>8</sup>

Apparently, the Newark District plan worked well and served as a successful model. In 1921, the Evangelization Union of Jersey City, Hoboken, and Bayonne was reorganized as the Jersey City District Church Society, serving a district which stretched along railroad lines from Bayonne up along the Hudson River to Haverstraw and west to Port Jervis and nearby communities on the Delaware River.

The district church societies were not just concerned with urban ministries. In its report for the year of 1928, the Newark District Church Society is found to have bought land for a new church in Union and to have paid the pastor's salary. That same year, the society also purchased land for a proposed new church building for the congregation in Denville.

Of course, the major emphasis of both district societies was on urban ministry. In Jersey City, the society focused on the work of Goodwill Industries. The concept of Goodwill was developed in Boston in the very early years of the twentieth century, in the basement of a Methodist church. There, indigent and handicapped workers took used clothing, furniture, and appliances, restored them, and sold them at low prices to local residents. In 1915, the Rev. G. G. Hollingshead, appointed to St. Paul's Church in Jersey City, established a Goodwill program there and in nearby Centenary Church. Goodwill was established and developed under the auspices of the Jersey City District Church Society, and the leadership of G. G. Hollingshead, who was superintendent of Goodwill from 1919 until his retirement in 1956. In addition to the program for the handicapped and indigent, Goodwill

<sup>6</sup>1895 Journal, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup>1907 Journal, p. 49.

<sup>8</sup>Constitution of the Newark District Church Society, quoting the 1948 *Discipline* of the Methodist Church, Paragraph 1220.

operated a community center ministering to Italian- and Slavic-Americans, and a summer camp for city children in Butler, New Jersey.

In Newark the district church society established a "Downtown Boys Club" and new congregations for people of Italian and of Czechoslovak descent. Plans were developed for a large downtown church center, which would include housing for senior citizens, a children's home, church facilities, and income producing properties. However, the Depression of the 1930's caused this proposal to be abandoned, and the property which had been purchased for the program was sold.

One important facet of the work of the district church societies was the vital contribution of deaconesses. A study of the role that deaconesses played in urban ministry in Northern New Jersey is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it should be noted that both the Newark and the Jersey City District Church Societies purchased and maintained homes for the deaconesses who worked in city ministries as teachers, social workers, and evangelists during the first half of the twentieth century.

After World War II, the Jersey City District Church Society authorized a detailed research survey of Methodism in Hudson County. The report was prepared and presented in 1949 by Dr. Frederick Shippey, who prepared a similar report on Newark Methodism two years later. Each was a study of population trends, the ethnic composition of various neighborhoods, and trends in church and Sunday school membership. Shippey's first recommendation is a familiar one: "Prepare a plan for Methodism. Without a master plan, the denomination flounders in handling its urban religious opportunity."<sup>9</sup>

Shippey's lament reflects a refrain visible in the reports of presiding elders and district superintendents from the 1860's until today. The reports say either: "Oh dear, we need a plan (or an organization or more money)" or they say: "Oh good, now we have a new plan (or a reorganization—but probably not enough money)" Our present district superintendent, the Rev. Betty Jane Young, who has devoted her life to urban ministry in the Eastern District, says: "There's a real question in my mind why we're not able to do strategic planning in the city."<sup>10</sup>

Certainly we have tried. John Lytle, in a report which is also included in this volume, writes that "One body that was most impressive—but was little heeded—was the Committee on City and Church Studies" which was organized in 1951, as suggested by Dr. Shippey. Lytle notes the careful study and presentations made by this committee during the following few years, but concludes his quotations with a sad comment from the 1956 report: "At present our Conference lacks long range planning. A strategy must be established . . ."<sup>11</sup>

Lytle's historical survey was originally part of another extensive effort at strategic planning for our conference, a 220 page report of the Commission on Ministry in the Eighties" delivered to the 1984 annual conference session. This commission recommended and the annual conference adopted a plan for a Strategic Growth Task Force. But just two years later, after a great deal of time and effort had been expended, the annual conference voted "that no additional or unbudgeted funding will be spent in 1986 or 1987 for Strategic Planning."<sup>12</sup>

There are, of course, two ways of looking at the sorry history of Methodism's long range planning for ministry in urban areas of Northern New Jersey. It might be said that the problem is that the districts and conference have never planned and organized properly. Or it might be concluded that too much time has been spent planning and organizing and not enough time and effort spent doing urban ministry.

But despite the planning or lack of it, the constant shortage of funds, the poverty of most urban neighborhoods, and the ever changing ethnic composition of many parts of the city, urban ministry has continued in Newark and Jersey City, and the organized district church society has continued to support this work. In 1952, the conference voted to realign districts, and the next year Newark and Jersey City became part of the new "Eastern District."

A newly reorganized Eastern District Church Society was immediately established. This society provided support for the Inner-City Mission developed at Lafayette Church in Jersey City by the Rev. Paul Jewitt as an outreach to the Hispanic-American neighborhood. It was I. C. M. which ministered to little Carmen Rodriguez, as related in the opening paragraph of this paper. The church society owned the buildings, paid the salaries, and continues today to support the Lafayette United Methodist Church.

The church society also supported Trinity Church in Newark as it made a very successful transition from a non-resident white congregation to an integrated and then a wholly black congregation, the society providing the salary for a black associate pastor. The church society also assisted Ms. Dorothy Rapino in the development of the Christian Approach to Urban/Suburban Encounter, which provides extensive ministries in the Journal Square area of Jersey City as well as an ongoing link with many suburban congregations. The Eastern District Church Society has also funded many other endeavors: the repair of the Union City Church, the Greater Newark Council of Churches, summer programs in Jersey City and camp scholarships in Union City, Essex County Planned Parenthood, CONTACT telephone hotline in Hudson County, and many other urban projects.

Today, the urban areas of the Eastern District continue to undergo rapid transformation. New ethnic communities consist of Americans from Portugal, Egypt, India, Cuba, Jamaica, Korea, and many other parts of the

<sup>12</sup>1986 Journal, p. 223.

<sup>9</sup>Shippey, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Betty Jane Young, May, 1988.

<sup>11</sup>See Lytle's article, p. (2-45).



world. Who would have dreamed fifteen years ago that middle-class young adults would be flocking to purchase and restore homes in Hoboken and Jersey City? Who can be sure whether or not a similar revival might occur in Newark? The United Methodist Church continues to seek new ways of ministering in these and other urban communities. The Eastern District Church Society<sup>13</sup> has been an important part of that work. Whether it will be a part of the future of urban ministry remains to be seen.

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<sup>13</sup>On September 30, 1988, at the annual meeting where this paper was first presented, the society was renamed the "Eastern District Church Union."